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by John P. Sisk

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by Norman St. John-Stevas

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THE
Commonweal
A Weekly Review of Public Affairs, Literature, and the Arts
THIRTY-FIFTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

week by week

ROUGH PROSPECT

THE OPENING of the foreign ministers' parley on Berlin marks a new stage in the cold war. It serves as a good point for surveying what has happened, and peering into the future. In this vital struggle between a system which offers certain possibilities for human freedom and one which embodies Marxist oppression, one element is constant. The Communist leaders continue intent on the domination of the whole world.

American and Allied efforts to stem Sino-Soviet pressures toward this goal have been but partially successful. The maintenance of defensive positions by means of our forward bases has prevented any full-scale invasions by Soviet troops. Aggression has been attempted through satellites and on a limited scale. We succeeded in holding the line in Greece and South Korea; we repelled one major threat to Berlin. On the other hand the Communists have taken over in North Viet Nam and are now seriously threatening to do likewise in strategic Iraq.

Russian withdrawal from a neutralized Vienna and Tito's defection hardly redress the balance in this picture. The strengthening of Western Europe, primarily through the success of the Marshall Plan, would seem to be our only positive gain of major proportions. And even this must be weighed against worldwide respect for Sino-Soviet achievements and fear of Communist power.

The adverse reaction against the Soviet Union for its ruthless smashing of the Hungarian uprising of 1956 was not nearly as vehement or widespread as expected. The Chinese suppression of Tibet has had greater impact on India and among the Asian peoples generally. Yet in neither instance would nations threatened by totalitarian expansion find encouragement to take a stand in their own defense.

The aggressive Sino-Soviet axis has the advantage of continuous interior communications. It can probe in one border area, feint toward another and make its real move somewhere else thousands of miles away. The NATO powers, relying primarily on massive retaliation that would now be two-way, have as yet developed no feasible counter-strategy.

No sweeping glance at the situation would be complete without reference to the rapid liberation of the colonial peoples. Generally speaking, they appear to deem the United States more guilty of imperialism than the revolutionary Sino-Soviet axis. Our own ideal and our record on self-determination get little attention.

We are fighting the cold war, then, against heavy odds. To what extent is time on our side? With the free world steadily losing ground and all-out war held off by a balance of terror, how long will the seeming indifference of the American people continue?

IT IS UNDENIABLE that both Soviet Russia and Communist China are making giant strides in industrialization. Living standards in both countries continue to rise from an originally very low estate. And the expansion of heavy industry will supply not only the foundation for even mightier military machines but also for the sinews for economic warfare. It will also enable the Soviets and Chinese to step up their efforts at world political penetration. This is a development which seems inevitable.

In the immediate future, productive capacity and economic well-being will also be increasing in the West—particularly if the transfer to automation is carried out with a minimum of social distress. Eventually the peoples of the two blocs might actually come to have somewhat comparable living stand-

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ards. But what path toward greater abundance will the underdeveloped countries take? The difficulties they now encounter because of inadequate capital and know-how are immense. And the Communists are very adept at exploiting their own success in building up productivity in the face of problems similar to those of the colonial peoples.

Truly few sectors in this projection of the immediate future indicate gains for the free world. The main currents seem to be moving against us. The policies we bring forward to stem the Communist surge appear ill-advised or inadequate. In the long run educational progress and the manifold contacts provided by world commerce may well result in certain interior strains and transformations in Communist countries. Likewise the scheduled all-out development of the Siberian and Chinese industrial complexes can in time lead to rivalry that would make enemies of the Russians and the Chinese.

But if in the meantime too many more countries have been swept into the Communist maw, such developments will have come along too late. The West still has a chance to combine with its firmness toward Khrushchev and the Chinese a more imaginative and enlightened program. This could include sufficient mobile conventional forces to bring into play when "little wars" threaten. It would call for our taking the initiative in self-policing plans for control of thermonuclear arms. And it would demand a wholehearted and practical concern for the peoples of the underdeveloped lands. It would not be the first time that the people of the United States had generated enough determination to take the steps needed to win out against great odds.

THE LADIES IN THE HATS

EVERY YEAR we resolve to stop being beastly to the Daughters of the American Revolution, if for no other reason than the fact that criticizing the organization is about as sporting as shooting fish in a barrel. And every year the ladies gather in solemn convention and in no time at all force us to forget all about our good resolutions.

This time it's the D.A.R.'s criticism of the United Nations Children's Fund that makes us feel that the D.A.R. has, shall we say, something less than a balanced view of things international. A very substantial part of the total UNICEF spending, charged the D.A.R., including thousands of dollars collected in a Halloween trick-or-treat project, "goes to Communist or Communist-controlled countries." Furthermore, said the D.A.R., the Christmas cards sold by the children's fund are "devoid of the Christmas spirit"—an ironic twist if ever we heard one.

One might, of course, explore the uses to which UNICEF funds are put and, conceivably, decide that children in Communist countries ought to receive such benefits, whatever the political character of the governments in those countries. But even the hardly esoteric conviction that children are children in Poland as well as in America seems irrelevant in view of the facts. UNICEF help is now being given to children in more than one hundred countries or territories, of which only Poland and Yugoslavia have Communist governments. The "very substantial" part of UNICEF's fund going to Communist countries turns out in 1958 to have been only one per cent, which was allocated to Poland—less than two hundred thousand dollars out of a program totaling almost twenty million dollars. Over the last eight years, in fact, less than three per cent of UNICEF funds has been allocated to Communist countries.

Thus unless the D.A.R. has its own definition of what "very substantial" means, the organization has made false charges against UNICEF, despite the fact that the correct information was readily available to it. Indeed, the executive director of the Children's Fund offered to go himself to Washington to lay the facts before the D.A.R.'s convention, but his offer was not accepted. The ladies presumably knew what they wanted to say, and they were not going to let a few facts interfere.

All in all, the D.A.R.'s behavior in this matter is incomprehensible. We can in all honesty say that we take no pleasure in criticizing the D.A.R. —perhaps because we have such happy memories of Helen Hokinson's drawings—but its leaders certainly make it hard to do anything else.

LYNCHINGS AND THE LAW

THROUGH THE flatlands and rolling hills of Poplarville, Mississippi, and into the bayous and swamps, the search for Mack Charles Parker continues. There is little hope that he will be found alive. For Mack Parker was dragged from his courthouse cell, beaten and thrown into a car which then disappeared into the night.

A Southern Negro, Mack Parker was in jail awaiting trial for the rape of a white woman. She had picked him out of a line-up of twenty-five men saying that, although she wasn't sure, he

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looked like the man. And though one of Parker's companions offered damaging testimony and he himself failed a lie test, he continued to assert his innocence. In the ordinary course of events he would have been brought to trial, the charges would have been evaluated and he would have been found guilty or innocent.

But the ordinary course of law seemed too slow or too uncertain for some of Mack Parker's fellow citizens. Wearing white gloves and masks, about a dozen white men in three or four automobiles stopped near the unguarded county jail and, apparently without haste or confusion, entered the jail, found the cellblock keys, forced their way into Parker's cell and dragged him yelling and protesting from the protection of his cell into the brutal custody of their keeping.

What is the reaction to this lynching? "I'd bet my right arm that nobody in Poplarville is involved," said the county prosecutor. A student home on a weekend: "Well, we got on the map. But I hope people in the North realize that we don't condone this sort of violence." A local businessman said that "we hate what happened yesterday but we hate what caused it to happen more than anything else." Governor Coleman of Mississippi had a measured response: "We trust that our citizens won't be punished by civil rights legislation as a result of what a small handful of men have done in violation of the law." His own feeling was evidently moderated by his stated belief that the evidence against Mack Parker was "conclusive" and that he would surely have been found guilty. The woman who was assaulted, when she heard of the lynching, asserted, "They got the right one."

In these statements one can discern a range of reactions. There is first the homage done to the judgment of those outside the community. They do not wish harsh judgments in Poplarville. Nor do they want reprisals in the form of legal restrictions. There is also the acknowledgment that the law was broken, but there is little feeling against those who broke it. There is, rather, the feeling that one wrong has been avenged by another, that by an illegal, irregular and admittedly reprehensible course, justice has somehow been achieved.

To concur in such a conclusion is to add to the grave crime already committed. Yet it does not seem helpful to read, from a lofty eminence, lectures to the South. There are those in the South who can better perform such duties. One can hope, however, that the death of Mack Parker may help persuade those who are yet in doubt that this country needs the laws which prevent the gross and unjust segregation which has been the burden of the Negro. It is not accidental that the most flagrant violations against the Negro have taken place exactly in those areas where the laws are most needed.

POST-TIBETAN ORIENT

THE CONSEQUENCES of the Tibetan revolt and its ruthless suppression by the Chinese Communists continue to unfold according to the pattern discerned in the U.S.S.R.'s invasion of Hungary.

The revolution, hopeless from the beginning, has apparently now been completely crushed, with two thousand Tibetans, according to Peiping's own count, having been captured or put to death. The Dalai Lama and everyone connected with the uprising are, of course, being condemned as "reactionaries" and "enemies of the people" in a furious Communist propaganda campaign throughout the East.

Reverberations of the Tibetan revolt are, as we might expect, also being felt within China. Public feeling against Tibet and against India, where the Dalai Lama has found refuge, is being whipped up by incessant radio propaganda. Reports from Sinkiang, a Chinese province bordering on Tibet, indicate that harsh measures have been invoked against a large number of Communist Party officials accused of "bourgeois," "anti-Party" and similarly standard heresies. Five Party functionaries in Sinkiang have been forced to confess their crimes and have been stripped of their ranks. More than three hundred others were assigned to a manual labor and "re-education" program.

It is obviously impossible to know how serious the dissension in China really is. That the purge in Sinkiang province is intended chiefly as a warning, to discourage even potential dissidents, is a not unreasonable supposition. But whatever the explanation, it is clear that the Peiping government is concerned lest other minorities follow the Tibetan example.

Outside China, repercussions of the Tibetan episode have made themselves strongly felt. In Japan, for instance, the recent election results revealed a sudden and severe drop in left-wing political strength. Most commentators believe that Communist actions in Tibet strongly influenced the voter's rejection of the Socialist Party, which had campaigned on an anti-U.S., cooperation-with-the-Communists kind of program.

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Furthermore, it seems clear that the train of events set in motion by China's invasion of Tibet is still not over. It may be, indeed, that this one brutal episode will become the turning point in the attitudes of the neutralist nations of Asia, that the history of Communism in the Far East will be divided into two periods—pre-Tibet and post-Tibet. Let us hope so; let us hope that the Tibetan people will not have suffered in vain.

THE KENNEDY BILL

AS WE HAVE said before, we favor the Kennedy bill for labor reform—not as the best possible bill but as the best bill with any chance of getting through the House. We are also in favor of a bill of rights for labor. However, although the McClellan amendment to the Kennedy bill was so labeled, it seems to us that in many ways it came closer to being a bill of attainder than a bill of rights. In the light of labor-management history in this country, we do not see how provisions for forced disclosure of membership rolls, for a whole new role for the Secretary of Labor, and for a vast extension of the power of injunction can be construed in any other way.

One can, of course, derive a certain wry amusement from the fact that conservative Southern Democrats at first solidly supported the McClellan proposals, reversing themselves and helping to defeat the measure only when they realized that their own ox could be gored by the amendment's sweeping extension of Federal powers. But labor reform is a serious matter, and we do not think this is the way to go about dealing with it. Having passed the Senate, the Kennedy bill will now go to the House. Its chances there are already somewhat slim; if more amendments like Senator McClellan's are added to turn it into an anti-labor measure, it will not deserve to pass, and in all probability there will be no labor reform bill. We hope this will not happen.

LITTLE MEN

CRITICS OF American Education often cite the diligence and responsibility of European school children, who, they say, are likely to value education as a privilege extended only to the deserving. American school children, on the other hand, as frequently pointed out, are apt to regard their precious opportunity for learning with massive indifference at best, and sometimes with downright hostility.

We have always been suspicious of the sweeping, over-simple generalization, and have resisted the exhortation to beat our breasts, or our children's, to look at Europe's superior ways and try to do likewise. We maintain that kids are kids, and that they are probably more alike than different. Furthermore, we know that there are many delicate factors involved here, and the attitude of children toward one element in their lives cannot in fairness be judged except in terms of the whole cultural complex. Of course, we ourselves are American, and perhaps the eyes we see with are too much the eyes of Huck Finn and all the other noble savages of the New World.

But now we are shaken, and by no more than a small and unimportant Reuters news dispatch from Stockholm. Swedish school children, we are told, were given their choice of continuing their present six-day school week or having every Saturday off. And, in the nationwide free balloting, seventy-two per cent of the students chose to go to school on Saturdays!

The one reassuring note in the whole affair is that Swedish education authorities were reported tc be "stunned" by the vote. We read the story to our (American) children, and they still don't believe it. There must be some explanation, some significant detail the news story omitted. Or can it be that Americans really are a breed apart?

ONWARD AND UPWARD

A FRIEND who has been giving serious thought to The Commonweal's financial problems has come up with a suggestion. The trouble with us, he said, is that we are still publishing a magazine in what is fast becoming the age of the newsletter. As he pointed out, somewhat scornfully, we don't even have a colored-paper insert, printed in typewriter-style type, purporting to give readers the inside dope straight from the Vatican. What we should do, our friend counselled, is face facts and go the newsletter titans one better. Send subscribers a mimeographed, three-by-five postcard every other week, he urged, and charge them $64 a year for the privilege. We will, he promises, make a fortune.

For all we know, our friend may be right. We're a tradition-bound as well as a timid lot around here, though, and we have decided we just don't want to get in step with the times.

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The Rover Boys Revisited

In our youth, the real library was each boy's shelf or two of beaten-up, dog-eared and scribbled-in treasures, half of them borrowed

by JOHN P. SISK

BY NOW several million Americans must have taken one side or another in the famous case of Dr. Dorothy Dodd vs. *Life* and the Governor of Florida. Dr. Dodd is the state librarian who "urged all public libraries in Florida to withdraw from circulation the following books: Uncle Wiggly, Tom Swift, Tarzan, The Bobbsey Twins, The Wizard of Oz, Horatio Alger, The Campfire Girls, The Hardy Boys, and others of that ilk" contending that they were "poorly written, untrue to life, sensational, foolishly sentimental and consequently unwholesome. . . ." Against this position Governor Collins "came out four-square in favor of freedom of choice for young readers, especially Alger readers."

My first reaction might have put me on the side of *Life* and the Governor, for I too had grown up on these books. However, I had some idea what the librarian was talking about, for at the time I was for my own purposes engaged in collecting and re-reading some of this controversial literature. As a result I found both sides of the argument unsatisfactory. Dr. Dodd sounded too practical and *Life's* indignation seemed dangerously nostalgic.

The truth is that nostalgia is about all many of us have to go on here. We tend to think of the corpus of juvenile reading as fundamentally unchanged and unchangeable from what it was when we were young. But should we decide to acquaint ourselves with what is available and being read today we might easily get the impression that we grew up in the dark ages of reading. The book making, the illustrations, the variety! This is a world away from the barbarous disorder of our own youthful reading.

The juvenile department of nearly any bookstore is likely to seem almost shockingly glamorous. We wander about looking for a familiar title like a man looking for a friend in a strange city. Here are names we associate only with adult literature: Richard Tregaskis, John Tunis, Quentin Reynolds, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Vincent Sheehan, Emily Hahn, Pearl Buck. Here are gorgeous versions of those adult classics that John Dewey once said it was pointless to hope for. Here are wonderful books all about the human body, the weather, whales, birds, chemistry, the insect world—splendidly illustrated and obviously scientifically sound. And here are beautiful junior libraries where at last we find a few familiar classics, but in contexts so luxurious that even they seem strange.

IT WAS different when we were young. Most of us knew nothing of bookstores and formal libraries. To me "library" meant the drab huddle of cast-off books in a corner of the grade school music room. But the real library was each boy's shelf or two of beaten-up, dog-eared and scribbled-in treasures, half of which at any one time might be on loan from similar libraries, and few of which appear today on the *Library Journal's* list of recommended books. These collections were enriched at Christmas and on birthdays, but even so they gave the impression of great age, and as likely as not their precious frontispieces had been torn or had disappeared entirely. Undisturbed by radio or television, we read them passionately. Our parents watched us uneasily, suspicious of anything that could absorb so completely. Fearful of eyestrain and muscle atrophy, they nagged at us to go out and play.

We read everything; or, rather, we read everything that we had learned from each other was worth reading. We read Oliphant and Optic and Alger and Henty, who looked like Alger from the outside but was supposed to be superior to him. We read Frank Merri-

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well in disreputable paperback: Frank who, when he needed to win the game, could hit a ball not into Bedford Avenue but over it, even though he knew the effort might ruin his fabulous pitching arm. And we read the Baseball Joe series, *Pitching in a Pinch* (Christy Mathewson), *The Last Play* (Ralph Henry Barbour), *Off Side* (William Heyliger) and the Home Run Series (Harold M. Sherman). Here was the romance of sport, and we accepted without question the doubtful philosophy that the chief ends of sport are team victory, development of character and glorification of the school.

Then there was the didactic romance of red-blooded Catholic adventure: the books of Father Finn *(Percy Wynn, Tom Playfair),* Father Boyton *(Cobra Island, Whoopee),* Father Garrold (the Freddy Carr stories), Father Holland *(Dan's Best Enemy, Reardon Rah!),* Father Scott *(A Boy Knight),* Marion Ames Taggart *(The Treasure of Nugget Mountain, Jack Hildreth of the Nile)* and that poet of titles, Father Spalding *(The Camp by Copper River, The Cave by the Beach Fork, The Race for Copper Island, Signals from the Bay Tree).*

Twain, Tarkington, Burroughs, London, Haggard, Curwood, Zane Gray, Alcott, Stevenson, Verne, Gene Stratton Porter, Cooper, Milne, Winston Churchill, Joseph Altsheler, Walter Camp, Lew Wallace, Conan Doyle and Dan Beard—they were all in those libraries. One of the poorest boys had all of O. Henry. There was a complete set of Poe in the school music room and a few of us worked through it morbidly. Also, there was the wonderful contraband of the Peck's Bad Boy series, books that had to be read on the sly as, a little later in life, we read movie magazines.

TO BALANCE the potential subversiveness of Peck there was Percy K. Fitzhugh. No one in my neighborhood was a boy scout; perhaps that was why scouting existed for us on a plane of high romance, and why Tom Slade, Roy Blakeley, Pee Wee Harris and Mr. Ellsworth (Superman disguised as a scoutmaster) could travel in the same company with Captain Nemo, Frank Merriwell and Tom Playfair. Now, re-reading *Tom Slade,* I am appalled at its barefaced propaganda. Fitzhugh is as religious a writer as Father Finn. It is a comfort to see how inferior is his imagination to Peck's.

But none of these books could compare with the Big Three of my boyhood: the Tom Swift, Motor Boys and Rover Boys series. The very sight of these books and the sound of the authors' names—Lester Chadwick, Clarence Young and Arthur M. Winfield—do for me what Proust's madeleine and tea did for him. Tom Swift the inventor, the Motor Boys (Bob, Ned and Jerry) and the Rover Boys (Dick, Sam, fun-loving Tom and their extrovert girls, Dora, Nellie and Grace) had as much reality for us as we had for each other.

Thus it was a shock to learn from a twenty-five-year-old *Fortune* that all these books and hundreds more, produced under a variety of pseudonyms, came out of the head of Edward Stratemeyer. Stratemeyer, disguised as Roy Rockwood, Victor Appleton, Clarence Young, Arthur M. Winfield, Laura Lee Hope, May Hollis Burton and Captain Ralph Bonehill, and aided by scores of hacks no one of whom ever got to see another, produced over eight hundred juveniles. Besides the Big Three he wrote or caused to be written the Bomba books, the Nancy Drew books, the Bobbsey Twins books, the Dave Dashaway books, the Baseball Joe books, the Speedwell books, the Great Marvel books, the Boy Hunters books, the Burton Books for Girls, the Jack Ranger books and many others.

Stratemeyer began with nothing and made a million; like the Governor of Florida, he grew up on Alger, and very appropriately got his start by completing a posthumous work of Alger. His ghost even marches on. Today children may read the Tom Swift Junior books by Victor Appleton II, who, whoever he is, knows a good deal more about science than his progenitor and writes better prose.

In the days of the Stratemeyer production-line, a common and not unexpected complaint was that Tom Swift and his kind overstimulated the imagination. The chief librarian of the boy scouts, for example, attacked Stratemeyer with an article entitled "Blasting Out the Boy's Brains." The librarian's approved writers were Barbour, Heyliger, Altsheler and Fitzhugh. It is apparent to me now that these writers did write better than Stratemeyer. We read their books and liked them, but we did not like them more than those authors who were supposed to blast out our brains, and some of us liked them less. What an authority on juvenile literature has said about children's "innate good taste" and "demands for the best" apparently did not apply to us. We were like Eudora Welty, who tells of discovering that the false Camp Fire Girls books were better than the real ones, in which "there was too much time given to teamwork."

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We were also like the children I have observed, who though they will watch Mouseketeers and Shirley Temple, prefer Popeye, Bugs Bunny and westerns. Indeed, what they seem to prefer is a cinematic version of what was most popular in my own youth. The Lone Ranger, Kit Carson, the Texan, Superman and Wild Bill Hickok have clear affinities with the Stratemeyer heroes. Their great advantage is, as Miss Welty says of the false Camp Fire Girls, that they get "into a more reliable kind of trouble."

IT IS THE relation between brain-blasting reading and sensational television adventure that makes so interesting the results of a recent survey of the effects of television on children. The survey, sponsored in England by the Nuffield Foundation, found that beyond a certain leveling tendency (to make the dull smarter and the smart duller) television has no appreciable effect, good or bad. The director of the survey concluded that "children are not in any way disturbed by the violence of cowboy films, and only by detective or murder plays if the situation be realistic or the moral standards of the characters ambiguous.

I am aware how unacceptable such conclusions are to many both in England and here, and I know the objections that such a survey is open to. How accurately, for instance, does one measure the effect of entertainment on anyone, especially the young? Nevertheless, the survey supported certain conclusions that were forced upon me as I reviewed my boyhood reading.

The first has to do with the amount of violence or excitement the young can tolerate. Some of them can tolerate more than others and certainly all of them ought to be guarded against wanton exploitation of violence for its own sake. I suspect, however, that most children can tolerate a good deal more violence than adults realize. The young are for one thing not so circumscribed by secularism, positivism and materialism as are their elders, whose ambivalent attitude towards violence is in relation to the spiritual starvation of modern life. Violence, and myth and fantasy which so readily take violent forms, menace the relatively well-lighted but restricted world of the adult and he projects his uneasiness into the world of the young.

But the young live more hyperbolically and in important respects more poetically and religiously. This, I imagine, is what Thoreau had in mind when he wrote: "Children, who play at life, discern its true law and relations more clearly than men." Life for the young quite naturally takes violent, mythical and fantastical forms and will be boring or meaningless in terms more pedestrian or "realistic." It is not so much that the young are more adventurous than adults as that all meaning that is available to them comes inescapably as an adventure.

This is why the world of Tom Swift and the Rover Boys was a world of "pluck" and "close escape," the one a requisite, the other a hazard of the searcher after meaning. Boyhood is a mythical enough time, but there is not in it the pastoral myth that some adults, seeking to compensate for their own failures and disappointments, try to put there. Even at its best it has by adult standards an operatic and harrowing quality. Stratemeyer, whose imagination was otherwise of an inferior order, at least knew this.

It is in relation to this operatic and relatively violent quality that the heightened moral quality of juvenile literature needs to be seen. The moral tone of much of the literature I read as a boy now seems hypocritical, sentimental or simply materialistic. Nevertheless, this literature was, I believe, far less corruptive in effect than in theory, and this was not only because of the natural resistance of innocence but because the morality, such as it was, was also an artistic principle of organization and control, without which the excitement and violence would often have been intolerable. The hyperbole that is in "the right kind of trouble" demands a countering hyperbole in the moral framework. This is as true for good juvenile literature as for trash. The subtle moral complexities of adult fiction would be both artistically wrong and morally confusing in juvenile fiction. The important thing to remember here as in all literature is that the function of hyperbolic statement is not primarily to distort or mislead but to clarify and reveal.

THE FINAL and related conclusion has to do with the literary value of juvenile literature. Most parents who read much as children testify to the indiscriminate voracity of their reading. How could it have been otherwise, literary taste being as hard to cultivate as it is? Nevertheless, these same parents worry a great deal about the literary taste of their offspring. They recognize, quite rightly, that though it is good for the young to do a lot of reading it is better for them to read what is good. Unfortunately, their idea of what is good in literature is often based on a misconception of literature and a misunderstanding of the needs of the young.

There is an inclination among adults to judge the literary excellence of a juvenile book by the euphony of its sentences, the conventional beauty of its descriptions, the gentle whimsy of its tone or its general air of sweetness and light. To this sort of thing the youngster may prefer, for good reasons of his own, the lusty trash of his comic book. One need only re-read some of the not very literary books that fascinated him when he was young to understand this perversity. Let him re-read the Rover Boys.

It may strike him that this is a strangely incomplete kind of fiction. Here on a primitive level is the stock-

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response literature that C. S. Lewis tells us *Paradise Lost* is. But the audience it was written for was a collaborator, and the adult, re-reading it but no longer able to find in himself a collaborating response, can only wonder what he saw in it. The secret to Stratemeyer's fantastic success lay in the fact that he was working in a tradition that had learned how to induce the ardent cooperation of the juvenile mind. And I am willing to believe that what the juvenile reader contributed to the Rover Boys series had greater literary value than what Stratemeyer or his ghosts contributed. In fact, the reader's own contribution helped to protect him from the corruption of Stratemeyer's bad writing. Indeed, this is true in different degrees at any age level of reading—and it is not an argument for a more lenient attitude towards bad writing but a comforting reminder in the face of it.

Perhaps what it all adds up to is this: those who wish to combat the Stratemeyers of this world (and those who have any concern for literature or the human personality have no other choice) must learn from them the importance of enlisting the creative collaboration of the juvenile reader. No matter how classic or literary or practically worthwhile a book may be, if it does not fulfill that reader's full-bodied needs and allow him a great deal of imaginative elbow-room, it will be passed by for the hack work that is shrewdly enough written to fulfill, however crudely, *some* need.

THE QUESTION OF OBSCENITY

Censorship and Law

by NORMAN ST. JOHN-STEVAS

CENSORSHIP of books continues to be a hotly debated question on both sides of the Atlantic, and in England a new stage has been reached with the acceptance by a House of Commons Committee of a bill liberalizing Britain's antiquated obscenity laws. The new bill, which has been in and out of Parliament for nearly four years, must still secure a third reading in the Commons and acceptance by the House of Lords, but these obstacles are minor compared with those which have already been overcome. Apart from the unlikely contingency of an early dissolution of the British Parliament, the new obscenity laws should be in force by the end of the year.

The hubbub in England began in 1954, when there was one of those periodical swirls of trouble about "obscene libel"—in plainer language, "dirty books"—which since the early nineteenth century have been a favorite indulgence of the Anglo-Saxon world. London had seen nothing like it since the twenties, when D. H. Lawrence, James Joyce and Radclyffe Hall became entangled with the law. In consequence, five English publishers of hitherto good reputation found themselves in the Old Bailey facing charges of publishing obscene books. The prosecution's score was not especially impressive: two books were found obscene and their publishers fined; two books were cleared; over the fifth book, Walter Baxter's *The Image and the Search*, two juries failed to agree and the charges relating to it were dropped.

Subsequently, as if to compensate for this drawn battle, the magistrates of Swindon, a Wiltshire railway town, ordered the destruction of Boccaccio's *Decameron* as an obscene and corrupting work, a decision which drew down upon them the scorn and wrath of the entire British press, and which was hurriedly rescinded on appeal. Alarmed by these developments, the Society of Authors set up a committee under the chairmanship of A. P. Herbert to protect the rights of reputable authors and publishers. Such committees have usually faded out in a fog of pious or minatory resolutions, but this committee, agreeing with A. P. Herbert that "a resolution is a whine: a bill a weapon," proceeded to draft the bill, radically changing the obscene libel laws, which is now before Parliament.

Under the present English law there are two distinct means of proceeding against alleged obscene publications. At common law it is an offense to publish an obscene libel, and for this any author, publisher or printer may be prosecuted and sent to prison for an unspecified period of time. Under Lord Campbell's Act of 1857 there are also statutory provisions for destroying obscene works. This act created no punishable offense and no penalties were laid down save for the destruction of the obscene matter. The legal definition of obscenity, also Victorian in origin, was

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established by Chief Justice Cockburn in the Hicklin case of 1868. A book is obscene, according to this definition, if its *tendency* is "to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences and into whose hands a publication of this sort may fall." This test was applied in all United States courts until Judge Augustus Hand confirmed the lifting of the ban on *Ulysses* in 1933, thus commencing an undermining process, recently completed by the U.S. Supreme Court.

THE SHORTCOMINGS of the Hicklin test are at once apparent. Since "tendency to corrupt" is the essence of the offense, a book can be condemned on the basis of a single obscene passage taken out of its context. No attempt is made to judge the book as a whole and accordingly its general purpose and intention are irrelevant. Literary or artistic merit is also ignored and the evidence of experts, such as critics of art or literature, is excluded. English law suffers from a further defect in that the initiation of proceedings remains in private hands. Any old lady can be shocked by a book in a circulating library and set the whole machinery of the law in motion against both author and publisher. The great lexicographer Samuel Johnson disposed of all such busybodies in a terse phrase. "Dr. Johnson," said a lady, "what I admire in your dictionary is that you have inserted no improper words." "What!" replied the Doctor, "You looked for them, madam?"

The Society of Authors' new bill attempts to remedy all these defects. Under the bill a publication can only be considered obscene if its effect "as a whole" is to deprave and corrupt those persons likely, "having regard to all relevant circumstances," to read or see it. And a new defense is incorporated in the bill exonerating all concerned if they establish that publication was for the public good in promoting the advancement of science, literature, art or learning. To aid in establishing this defense, expert evidence is made admissible. Finally, all proceedings under the bill are subject to the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions. This will insure that merely vexatious prosecutions are no longer brought, and a uniform standard in administering the law obtained throughout the country. The effects of the bill will thus be to leave to the police adequate powers to suppress "hard core" pornography while safeguarding the freedom of authors and publishers of serious purpose and good intent.

At the time of the drafting of the bill, the Home Secretary, the Cabinet Minister responsible for this sphere of the law, was unsympathetic to the proposed changes and the Society of Authors therefore introduced the bill into the House of Commons as a private member's bill. The principal disadvantage of this procedure is that time for discussion of such bills is strictly limited and unless the Government allots special time for its consideration a bill has no chance of passing through all its stages in Parliament's yearly session, at the end of which it lapses, and has to be reintroduced at the beginning of the next session. The Society of Authors' bill, introduced first by a Labor Member, Mr. Roy Jenkins, then a Conservative, Mr. Hugh Fraser —a Catholic—and finally by Lord Lambton, met this fate three times. In the fall of 1958 it seemed that a stalemate had been reached and that, despite the overwhelming support for the bill shown by the House of Commons, it would be many years before it passed into law. However, after much political maneuvering, Sir Alan Herbert and the sponsors of the bill prevailed upon the Government to announce its intention of giving Parliamentary time for the new obscenity bill.

At this point the future of the bill seemed reasonably assured, but a further complication appeared in the form of a major controversy over the American novel *Lolita*. *Lolita* had been originally published in Paris, first in French and then in English. The English edition was intended for English importation but was suddenly suppressed by the French police, although the French version was not censored. At once, a furious debate began in the English press, the French Government being accused of suppressing *Lolita* at the request of the British Home Office. An English publishing house, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, then announced that they would publish *Lolita* and take the risk of prosecution. The controversy grew fiercer as to whether or not *Lolita* should be published, the demand for it steadily growing, and being met by smuggled importations from America and, curiously enough, through the public library of Tunbridge Wells, a quiet English country town. The enterprising librarian there had obtained two copies before the debate began, but these discreetly disappeared as the outcry grew more impassioned. The agitation for the publication of *Lolita* greatly embarrassed the Society of Authors, who were convinced that whatever its literary merit, its theme would scarcely commend it to the British public, and that the identification of the cause of law reform with *Lolita* would hardly be beneficial. Fortunately, the *Lolita* uproar has subsided, or at least been postponed.

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It now appears that publication of the book will be delayed until the passing of the new bill, when it will become the first test case under the revised law.

WITH THE PASSAGE of the Obscene Publications Bill, English law will closely approximate that of the United States. The new text of obscenity will then resemble that laid down by Judge Hand in the *Ulysses* case. "We believe," said the judge, "that the proper test of whether a given book is obscene is its dominant effect. In applying this test, relevancy of the objectionable parts to the theme, the established reputation of the work in the estimation of approved critics, if the book is modern, and the verdict of the past, if it is ancient, are persuasive pieces of evidence." In the U.S., despite this lead from the federal courts, some state courts continued to apply the old Hicklin formula. But in 1957 the U.S. Supreme Court, in the Roth case, declared that the Hicklin test "judging obscenity by the effect of isolated passages upon the most susceptible persons, might well encompass material legitimately treating with sex, and so it must be rejected as unconstitutionally restrictive of the freedoms of speech and press." In its place Justice Brennan substituted a new test: "whether to the average person, applying contemporary community standards, the dominant theme of the material taken as a whole appeals to prurient interest." As Father Harold Gardiner has pointed out, this test bears some resemblance to that of canon law which condemns works "ex professo" obscene.

The Roth case has undoubtedly had a liberalizing effect on American law and administration. Since June 1957, several cases banning material from the mails have been reversed with only one explanatory line—a citation of the Roth case. The Chicago ban on the French movie "Game of Love" has also been reversed. In the administrative field, the U.S. Post Office for the first time has established an official procedure to give a prompt and fair hearing to the mailers of materials excluded as obscene. Furthermore, the Treasury Department has released on legal advice the materials intended for the late Dr. Kinsey's Institute of Sex Research. To be set against this liberalizing process, however, is the confirmation by the Supreme Court in the Kingsley Books case of the use of injunctions to restrain sellers of pornography. In sum, nevertheless, United States law has reached the position aimed at in the British Society of Authors' bill, distinguishing between works of serious literature, incidentally obscene, and sheer pornography. And here a sobering reflection may be made. If the law is tightly drawn and strictly enforced, then the activities of private censoring groups tend to fade away. If the law is liberalized, the activities of such groups inevitably increase.

Primary responsibility for a moral literature, it should be remembered, rests not upon the law but on the standards of integrity of authors themselves. The law only intervenes when a breakdown has occurred. The problem of obscene literature is, in any case, only part of a much wider problem of the sexual mores and ethical outlook of society in general. St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, connects the spread of sexual aberrations with the adoption of a wider false morality. Pornography is a symptom, not a disease, and it would be a pity to substitute the occasional pursuit of the outrageous, which is all the law can effect, for a sustained and rational attempt to rectify the infinitely more horrifying exploitation of sex for sales purposes in our commercial, liberal society.

SAINT MARTIN'S INFIRMARY

Now once again old Anselm clings at his window,
Watching the oaks sift leaves upon the dead.
The wind stirs
Between the stones;
The stones are settled a little more this year,
The dead
A little older in the earth.

Beyond the lake
The students he will never teach
Gather for a football game,
A game he never played.
They howl in the wind,
Sending shivers through the glass.

Old Anselm feels the length of his long wet nose
And is startled that it is cold.
He watches the sky with squinted eyes
For snow.

The berries of a wild grape rattle in the air.
The jays scream in the bare wood.
Beneath the Judas tree the dry leaves whirl
And are gone.

Old Anselm coughs, spitting on the pane.
He hears old Maurus in the hall,
Wandering with his bell.
It is not noon,
It is not night,
And yet he rings.

Old Anselm holds his chest,
Feeling the cross within his clothes,
And bending near the spattered glass to watch the trees
He sees a shadow come among the stones.

JOHN A. LYNCH.

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France's new movement follows the path of rejection

Arrival of the Anti-Novel

by VIVIAN MERCIER

FRANCE IS a country where literature constantly makes news. Right after World War II the existentialism of Sartre and the "absurd" of Camus were in the headlines. Then came the "new drama" of Beckett and Ionesco. Now we have *le nouveau roman*—"the new novel." Actually, it will be five years in July since the critic Roland Barthes announced in *Critique* "the advent of a new novelistic esthetic." Since then a number of writers have "joined" the movement or been claimed as members: the excellent critical symposium in the July-August 1958 issue of *Esprit* gives brief biographies, bibliographies, and summaries of critical opinion for no fewer than ten "new novelists."

Only one of these is much more than a name to literate Americans—Samuel Beckett, whose complete works will soon be in print here at the rate Grove Press is publishing them. The same firm has recently published *The Voyeur,* the second of three novels by Alain Robbe-Grillet, who may fairly be described as the leader of the movement. It was *à propos* of his first novel that M. Barthes made his solemn pronouncement; as literary director of *Les Editions de Minuit,* M. Robbe-Grillet has published himself, Beckett, and five other authors of the ten listed by *Esprit.* He has also expounded his theory of the novel in several articles or manifestoes, one of which, "A Path for the Novel of the Future," has appeared in *Evergreen Review.*

Mme. Nathalie Sarraute, another theoretician of the movement, is often quoted, but the only book by her yet translated is *Portrait of a Man Unknown,* published here last year by George Braziller. This, the first of her three novels, appeared in France as long ago as 1947, with a preface by Sartre calling it an "anti-novel." Braziller has published *The Wind* by Claude Simon, and Pellegrini and Cudahy have published *The Sea Wall* by Marguerite Duras; both of these writers are on *Esprit's* roster, as well as the established Catholic poet and novelist, Jean Cayrol, whose *All in a Night* has been published in England. Simon and Schuster have just come along with the first "new novel" to become a best-seller in France, Michel Butor's third book, *A Change of Heart.* Under its French title, *La Modification,* this won the 1957 Renaudot Prize, one of the annual "Big Four" literary prizes, and sold over 100,000 copies.

The new novel had arrived! In devoting over a hundred pages to its symposiums, *Esprit* was giving recognition to an accomplished fact; Olivier de Mogny, the admirable critic who wrote the major article in that issue, was partly justified in using the spacious title "Panorama of a New Novelistic Literature."

WHAT, THEN, *is* this "new novel," whose sudden rise to fame I have just chronicled? Here we have to distinguish carefully between theory and practice. Essentially, the path which M. Robbe-Grillet prescribes for the novel of the future is a path of rejection. The first thing to be rejected is the "old" novel's "sacrosanct psychological analysis." Indeed, all frames of reference, all "grids," are to be rejected as out of keeping with an existential universe. The world "is neither significant nor absurd. It simply *is.*" And again, "Around us, defying the hound-pack of our animistic or domesticating adjectives, things *are there.*" Abandoning preconceptions and frames of reference almost necessarily involves the rejection of plot, of characterization, of the entire inner life of the novelist's personages.

What remains when all this has gone? Well, *things* mostly. "In place of this universe of meanings (psychological, social, functional), one must try to construct a more solid, a more immediate world. Let it be first of all by their *presence* that objects and gestures force themselves upon us." Furthermore, the personages must impose themselves in the same existential way: "The hero of the future . . . will remain *there.*"

Naturally, the highly articulate French critics have applied a number of striking phrases to the new movement. Sartre, as we have seen, has spoken of "anti-novels," a category in which he includes the works of Vladimir Nabokov and Evelyn Waugh, and Gide's *The Counterfeiters.* "The novel," says Sartre, "is in the process of reflecting over itself." Roland Barthes

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coined the term "pre-novel" to categorize *L'Espace d'une nuit (All in a Night)* and all the other works of Cayrol. MM. Claude Mauriac and de Magny both admire a kind of pre-psychology in Nathalie Sarraute; she can detect emotions that exist but don't yet have a name, according to M. de Magny; M. Mauriac calls these emotions *"sarrauteries."* Michel Leiris, not to be outdone, has invented the term "mythological realism" to apply to M. Butor's work. M. de Magny divides the new novelists' works into three groups: first, those concerned with "the novel's search for itself"; second, "the novel's negation of itself"; and the third, the case of Robbe-Grillet, "novels not without a search but without questions, without dispute, without ambiguity."

WHEN THE reader turns from the critics and the manifestoes to the novels themselves, he may be disappointed. Borrowing M. de Magny's categories, I feel that the new writers have succeeded best in the novel's negation of itself. Samuel Beckett's trilogy *(Molloy, Malone Dies,* and *The Unnamable)* is from one point of view a treatise on the impossibility of writing a novel, and one which parodies many familiar types of novel. But many American critics, myself included, have already written on Mr. Beckett and established the main feature of his trilogy.

Let me move on to M. de Magny's third category, the one which he reserves for Alain Robbe-Grillet, the chief spokesman and organizer for the new movement. Not having read *Les Gommes* (and therefore not being sure even of what its title means—*The Gums? The Erasers?* Something else?) I begin with *The Voyeur.* If one doesn't get stuck on board the steamboat edging infinitely slowly toward the island quay in the first thirty pages, one finds onself speeding through an exciting tale, rather like a Georges Simenon crime thriller that has been put through a Mixmaster. At the end, one cannot be sure whether a peculiarly sadistic sex murder has been committed by the obsessed salesman, Mathias, or whether the crime was one of the hallucinations or daydreams to which he is clearly prone. At any rate, there seems little doubt that someone murdered the promiscuous adolescent, Jacqueline. In the course of the book one has seen many things, real or imaginary, through the eyes af Mathias, including a number of pairs of rust marks, knotholes, etc., each pair forming a figure eight; a piece of string; several blue packs, full or empty, of *Gauloise* cigarettes; a seagull or two. "Ah—symbols!" you may say, but in practice as well as theory they seem too much "there" to be significant or symbolic.

One has also read, without seeing *anything,* several passages of neorealistic prose like the following: "With his left hand he then takes hold of the first rectangular strip of cardboard by its lower left corner and holds it at the level of his chest, tilted at an angle of forty-five degrees, the two long sides parallel to the table top. Between the thumb and index finger of his right hand. . . ."

In M. Robbe-Grillet's latest novel, *La Jalousie* (which means not only "jealousy" but "the venetian blind"), we have an opportunity of observing, through the eyes of a jealous husband, the pillars and balustrade of a porch, not to mention several hundred acres of banana plantations. We also observe, intermittently, his wife A. . . and her supposed lover, Franck: "The distance between A. . .'s left hand and Franck's right hand is about ten centimeters." Nevertheless the book is a *tour de force,* for we never learn the husband's name, hear his voice, see his face, or penetrate his mind beyond the level of perception to reach the level of judgment. Properly speaking, he is not "given" in the book; we have to construct him for ourselves. His ruling passion, even, is never named except in the title.

M. Robbe-Grillet himself has pointed out, in "A Path for the Novel of the Future," how the most banal novels, when filmed, take on an existential quality: whereas "in the original novels, the objects and gestures . . . would disappear completely, to leave room for their meanings only. . . ," in the film version "it is the gestures themselves, the objects, the movements and the outlines to which the picture has restored at one blow (without wanting to) their *reality."* Precisely. One wonders why such an intelligent man as M. Robbe-Grillet wastes so much time trying to do in words what the camera achieves without even trying. Eventually he must abandon his cigarette-pack descriptions or give up writing to become a movie director.

I THINK THAT Mme. Sarraute and M. Butor have both written books which belong in the first category of novels, those "in search of the novel." What's more, in searching for the novel, they find it—the good old *roman bourgeois* which they supposedly detest.

As the middle-aging male narrator of Mme. Sarraute's *Portrait of a Man Unknown* observes an old man and his spinsterish daughter, we are at first intellectually stimulated by two themes which the narrator makes explicit: the unconscious bond (*à la* D. H. Lawrence) between father and daughter, which their conscious behavior so often belies; and the way in which all humans blur the sharp edges of particularity and fill the yawning abysses of reality with comforting words full of generalization and falsehood. (The latter, by the way, is the main theme of most of the little sketches of human tropisms in Mme. Sarraute's first book, *Tropismes.*) But gradually the narrator is forgotten, something suspiciously like an autobiographical element breaks through, and we find father and daughter making old-fashioned melodramatic scenes when alone with each other. Finally, inexplicably, the father gives in, and she marries a dull but wealthy hus-

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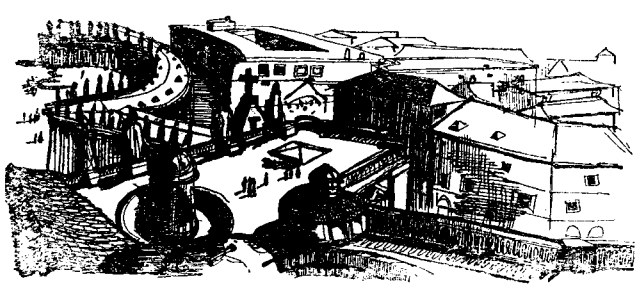
band, to the satisfaction of all the gossipy female neighbors. The narrator, who likes to see "the other aspect" of things, and had always hoped to find another dimension in the lives of father and daughter, reappears at the end of the book; alas, he has become "normal," and is now eager to babble platitudes with the gossips.

As for M. Butor—also a connoisseur of cigarette packs, angles of forty-five degrees and other "objects," including railroad schedules—he has provided us (once we pare away the devices borrowed from Proust and Joyce, the symbolic Great Huntsman of French folklore, and the parallel with Aeneas' descent into Hades in Book VI of the *Aeneid*) with a slick French version of *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit.*

Let me try to summarize his *A Change of Heart.* The forty-five-year-old Paris sales head of an Italian typewriter firm is on his way to Rome by train. He plans to surprise his youngish mistress there with the news that he has found a job for her in Paris; he will leave his wife and share an apartment with the girl henceforward. Fortunately or unfortunately, as this trip is not covered by his expense account (he is having a brief vacation), he spends the twenty-hour journey sitting upright in a day coach, at first remembering his married life and the days spent exploring Rome with his mistress; then dozing into Virgilian nightmares; and, finally, brooding over the dismal failure of the girl's one previous visit to Paris. He realizes that her glamor springs from her identification with Rome in his subconscious mind. By the time he reaches Rome, he has decided not to visit her this trip or bring her to Paris ever; ultimately the affair will end and he'll bring his wife to Rome for a vacation.

The most remarkable gimmick of this gimmicky book is that it is written in the second person; thus the reader is forced to identify with the traveler, who would normally be the "I" of the novel. I dislike this device when Jimmy Cannon uses it ("Your name is Ted Williams. You are 39 years old. You are still the greatest hitter in the American League." To which the only answer is "I am not!"), and M. Butor leaves me still suspicious of it.

M. CLAUDE MAURIAC, eldest son of the Nobel prizewinner, had a good idea for a book which he hasn't found time to write. Instead, for *The New Literature,* he has slapped together some of his longer recent book reviews, written a minimal introduction and conclusion, and interpolated a few bridge passages —*et voilà!* The French title, *Alittérature Contemporaine,* gives us the only new idea the book contains: namely, that each new movement in literature tries to produce "a-literature," to rid itself of all that seemed conventional and "literary" in the work of the previous generation. M. Mauriac never succeeds in defining "a-literature" and therefore fails to show just why he chose the writers he did—a most miscellaneous group of creators and critics. Besides the three "new" novelists already mentioned, he discusses Kafka, Antonin Artaud, Henry Miller, Michel Leiris, Georges Bataille, Albert Camus, Henri Michaux, Simenon, Wladimir Weidlé, Jean Rostand, Roger Caillois, Roland Barthes, Dionys Mascola, and E. M. Cioran. It would be hard to say what this mob have in common besides the fact that one book by each has recently been published in France. M. Mauriac himself admits, "I could just as well have discussed Joyce, Roger Gilbert-Lecomte, [Maurice] Blanchot, Sartre, [René] Char, Ponge, Virginia Woolf. No doubt my report would not have differed greatly." No doubt!



It is, however, strange that M. Mauriac contents himself with the barest mention of Francis Ponge, the poet whose descriptive writing comes closest to the ideal of objectivity which M. Robbe-Grillet has vainly set himself. M. Ponge, who has been writing his prose poems since 1919, apparently, made his name in 1942 with *Le Parti pris des choses.* I suppose one might translate this as *The Bias of Things* or even *The Rank Obstinacy of Things.* When M. Ponge has finished presenting a thing—be it a cigarette, an orange or an oyster—that thing's *presence* is inescapable. And yet we never forget that the miracle is one of words. For sheer mastery of the French language there is no one living to touch M. Ponge. Hence he is almost unknown outside France, being untranslatable.

Still, why this obsession with "things?" Aren't existentialists naïve in regarding objects as more stable, or more real, even, than states of mind? Nevertheless, the "suspicion" Mme. Sarraute speaks of is very widespread today. People no longer merely mistrust traditional beliefs or the voice of conscience—they mistrust consciousness itself. Mr. Beckett's *The Unnamable* is in part devoted to the refutation of Descartes' "I think; therefore I am." The existentialist viewpoint is rather "Things *don't* think; therefore they are." As Camille Bourniquel writes in *Esprit,* "it is a certain notion of Man and the intelligibility of the created world that are in the balance this time." M. de Magny sums up the "new novel" in these words: "Rejecting an alienated human condition, the paradox of this realism consists in its throwing us back upon our own unreality." If this fertile soil is actually tilled, the "new novel" may be with us until it is very old indeed.

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SAUCE FOR THE GOOSE

NOW LET US suppose that the Catholic Bishops of the United States have gathered in solemn conclave for their annual meeting in Washington and have summoned Presidential aspirants for an old-fashioned inquisitorial session. Let us add that each potential candidate to appear comes before the episcopal board alone, as is fitting for inquisitorial sessions. Let us further add, as a metropolitan newspaper recorded on a similar occasion, that the meetings were held "behind closed doors." Zowie! You would hear such protest as has not been heard since Mark Clark was obliged to unpack his bags.

But something like that did happen two weeks ago and scarcely a protest was heard. Fifty-one American Methodist bishops met in Washington and put a few questions to Richard Nixon, Lyndon Johnson, Hubert Humphrey and John F. Kennedy, all of them Presidential hopefuls. Senator Kennedy, the lone Catholic in the group, was the only one asked about Church-State matters.

Why, I ask myself, was there so little protest from the individuals and organizations one might expect to scream bloody murder were the Catholic Bishops to do the same thing? Then I have to face up to the fact that the man who arranged this "odd inquisition"—as *Time* labeled it—was Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam, an official of Protestants and Others United for the Separation of Church and State and an ecclesiastic one might expect to abhor this sort of—of what? Well "separation of Church and State" does not leap to mind.

If a group of Government officials and potential candidates appearing before a Board of Bishops to answer the Bishops' questions about political matters is not a breach in the wall we hear so much about, I will eat my shirt.

Still, to Bishop Oxnam and others who might be counted on to protest were the assembled Bishops Roman Catholic, the whole proceedings seemed proper. After all, *they* believe in separation, so when they breach the famous wall, the wall is not really breached. But the Catholic Bishops—well, they can not be trusted, so when they breach the wall it is really breached. That must be it. The only way you can breach the wall without breaching it is to sit on it.

I don't know what Paul Blanshard makes of all this, but I will tell you what I think. I think the Methodist Bishops acted with questionable propriety.

As individual Americans, the Methodist Bishops have the right every citizen has to inform himself about potential candidates for high office. But meeting as churchmen, moreover meeting in an ecclesiastical conclave, the Bishops were clearly out of line. What explanations did the candidates have to make to the Bishops as Bishops? What assurance does the Methodist Church require from Government officials before it gives them its approval? What are the Bishops up to, that they feel it is their business as Bishops to grant or withhold approval from individual candidates? Does the Methodist Church plan to enter the 1960 campaign?

Equally important, why did the candidates come? I felt fairly sure of Senator Kennedy's position on the Church-State question a few weeks ago. His appearance before the Council of Methodist Bishops now gives me serious pause. I would be a lot happier if he, as well as Messers Nixon, Johnson and Humphrey, flatly refused to play along and told Bishop Oxnam if not to peddle his papers at least to read them.

Time likened Senator Kennedy to a Daniel going into a lions' den. Maybe that is the way it seemed to him too, but this was one lions' den political Daniel should stay out of. Though the lions may have sharp teeth, they are pledged not to use them on political candidates. The candidates, it seemed to me, should have taught the Bishops a lesson. By meekly going along, they indicated that they did not know when to stand on their rights as political leaders. I have read a great deal, some of it written by Methodists, expressing concern about whether Senator Kennedy could withstand pressure from the Catholic Bishops. I am reasonably sure the Catholic Bishops do not intend to put pressure on him. But the Methodist Bishops already have, and it is not very reassuring to learn that he did not withstand it.

Am I making a mountain out of a molehill? Perhaps. I do not suggest that anything sinister went on behind those closed doors, nor do I presume that the Bishops exacted any promises from the candidates, though I feel sure such would be suggested if the prelates meeting happened to be Roman Catholics.

But we are left with the fact that the meeting took place and that even such a P.O.A.U. stalwart as Bishop Oxnam apparently saw nothing improper in it. This is fairly astonishing. I conclude that all the talk we have had to listen to about the impregnable wall of separation was wind. The real issue, it appears, is not separation at all; the principle of separation, rather, has been used as a weapon to carry on a polemic against Catholicism.

This is a melancholy conclusion, indeed. For different groups of Americans—granting that some are Catholics and some are adherents of the P.O.A.U., like Bishop Oxnam—can reach agreement about the Constitutional meaning of separation. The prospect of their achieving agreement about Catholicism itself is hopelessly remote.

JOHN COGLEY.

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THE SCREEN

NO VIEW, NO ROOM

VITTORIO DE SICA'S "The Roof," made several years ago but only now released in this country, has the same theme as "The Eighth Day of the Week." The main differences between the two movies are those of temperament and tone: the life portrayed in Warsaw is still at a post-war depression level, while the Roman scene in "The Roof," although also discouraging for the newly-married young couple, at least holds promise of something better to come.

The incidents in "The Roof" do not overwhelm the audience as did the situations in de Sica's "Shoe Shine" and "The Bicycle Thief," but they have a simple poignancy that is quite touching. Luisa's father objects to the marriage, so she and Natale leave his small town somewhat unhappily—but hopefully—to live with Natale's family in Rome. The crowded, two-room apartment is far from ideal; the young couple share the bedroom with Natale's mother and father and younger sister, while Natale's older sister and her husband and two children sleep in the living room-kitchen.

These people make a sincere effort to live together compatibly, but the inconveniences, embarrassments and short tempers prove too much. When Luisa, now pregnant, has a bitter quarrel with Cesare, the brother-in-law, the angry young couple pack their few things in a cart and move out. This situation is particularly awkward because Natale, as apprentice, works with Cesare who is an experienced mason. With nowhere to go the young couple end a futile search for an apartment, by deciding to build a squatters' shack on government property on the outskirts of the city. The cottage there must be built in the dead of the night and be complete with a roof before it is discovered by the police.

The exciting latter part of the film is devoted to the building of this one-room house. Scriptwriter Cesare Zavattini, who has collaborated with Producer-director de Sica on all his famous neo-realistic films, has once again written a very moving and socially-conscious screenplay. He and de Sica are well aware of the wrongs that force Natale and Luisa to fight so hard to maintain their dignity, but the important thing is that the young couple do survive, that Cesare comes to their aid at the last minute, that neighbors prove helpful and that people, in spite of adverse conditions, are still motivated by human kindness.

Under de Sica's direction the cast is excellent. Once again he has used non-professional actors well. Gabriella Pallotti, a former secretary and schoolgirl, and Giorgio Listuzzi, a soccer player, portray Luisa and Natale with a warmth and simple naturalness that makes them as real and appealing as the young couple next door.

ANOTHER IMPORT is the sensational "Love Is My Profession," as Gallic in flavor as "The Roof" is Italian. Based on Georges Simenon's *In Case of Emergency,* it has a favorite subject of Simenon: the disintegration of a middle-aged man who is suddenly caught in the lure of sexuality. The film is extremely well directed by Claude Autant-Lara, who handles his unpleasant characters and story as if to say, "Here they are and this is what they did." As a consequence, in spite of its flashy material, the movie has a cold and clinical aspect that leaves the viewer untouched and unmoved.

Heading the impressive cast is Jean Gabin as a successful, well-established lawyer unable to resist a young client even though he knows she is a tramp and soon discovers she is a nymphomaniac and dope peddler. Brigitte Bardot, in what is perhaps her best performance to date, plays this amoral girl who is intrigued by her middle-aged lover but cannot give up the young student to whose cheap hotel she goes every now and then even after the lawyer sets her up in an elegant house. Franco Interlenghi plays this student-worker with a vehemence that contrasts effectively with Gabin's dead-pan approach. And Edwige Feuillere, cool and lovely as always, makes the role of Gabin's wronged wife a pitiable figure who can only wait for her husband's return.

"Love Is My Profession" is a sordid melodrama with a deadliness that repels. The script, which Jean Aurenche and Pierre Bost wrote from the Simenon novel, fails to make clear why the lawyer would risk his reputation to take on this client's case with the help of a perjurer or just what happened in the relationship between the lawyer and his attractive wife. The crime-does-not-pay ending hardly compensates for the earlier crime-in-action episodes. One wonders, at the finale, what all this adds up to.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

THE STAGE

THE HUMANISM OF CRISIS

I SIT, like Job, heaped about with the ashes of fires doctrinal, moral, theoretic, vehement and detached, ignited all by the ambitious flame of Mr. Archibald MacLeish's "J.B." To those equally in my cold and comfortless state, I would commend the gently hostile blazes of Drs. Driver and Terrien in the

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Christian Century (an attempted dousing by Dr. Van Dusen was not successful); the generous heat of Father Daniel Berrigan in *America,* of Mr. Henry Hewes in the *Saturday Review* and Rabbi Herbert Weiner in *Commentary;* Mr. Lionel Abel's scorcher in *Partisan Review,* and the last incendiarism of Mr. Kenneth Tynan, who invoked Dr. Johnson to announce, via Boswell and the *New Yorker:* "Sir, there is no trusting to that crazy piety."

Those warmed by the spectacle of "J.B." may claim with justice the dramatist's own persuasions, again in a recent *Christian Century;* Mr. William White's manly though intemperate defense in *Harper's,* and now this unique document—The File on J.B., shall we call it? —that has flowered in the new *Esquire:* a record of production which, for all its technical interest and mortal terror, is perhaps never so revelatory as in its opening to the rosy ecstasy of Mr. Brooks Atkinson and its closing within his apotheosis.

It has all been very interesting: the pity is, so much more so than the play. Nor is there but a small sorrow in that. Cultural piety demands each year its raw meat of sustenance, and "J.B." will serve as well as another for that weary mastication we call the exercise of democratic opinion. The great sorrow is that it need never have been so, that of the honorable fervor of Mr. MacLeish's sentiment, the reality of his broken conscience before a broken world, no doubt is to be admitted.

I wish firmly to make this point, for Mr. MacLeish is as cruelly patronized by the serious academy as he is hypocritically embraced by the shysters of ideological market research. He invites, to be sure, such dual response by the constant forcing of his lovely, lyric, private talent to the windy reaches of official statement —it may be Job now, but twenty years ago, you will recall, it was Fascism; and *pace* Mr. White in *Harper's,* the attempt "to become a big literary figure, a gold florin, so to speak, at a time when two-bit figures fill so many books and so much of the stage," is a hazardous path to reality and to art, to honor or to truth.

What moves one to uneasy question in the "J.B.," to sadness and a possible indignation, is the commendable virtue—let alone the wisdom—of manipulating this most disastrous tragic glory of antiquity to the uses of a rhetorical essay in American abstraction. Two experiences of Mr. MacLeish's play, both entered upon in good and hopeful faith, have convinced me it is nothing more. At best, one is touched by the poet's conscious sincerity and the huge, jutting shadow of the Old Testament; at worst, one is beset by melancholy at the vanity of good intentions, and by a certain distasteful presence in the atmosphere, a residue of unexamined impulse, as of a kind of spiritual careerism.

Whatever *The Book of Job* may be—"the universal symbol for the western imagination of the mystery of undeserved suffering," Mr. Richard Sewall calls it in his distinguished new study, *The Vision of Tragedy:* "the very definition of the tragic moment . . . a classic example of the dynamics of tragedy, of vision creating form . . ."—whatever it may be, it is not an abstraction. It issues like a tongue of flame from out the Hebraic essence to scorch to ashes all that is mere seeming, all that would solace, all that is not the passionate encounter of I and Thou.

Precisely this intimacy of persons—a terrible bondage of love and awe—gives the anguish of Job its peculiar torment, its sense, as Mr. Sewall notes, of "a cosmic breach of faith." What is more, the tragic *agon,* the dialectic, of Job brings into harsh, warring statement ultimate extremities: the savage inquiry and demand for righteousness of a critical, racial tradition; the caprice of Jehovah, as man would see it, and the infinite rebuke of His majesty out of the whirlwind. It discharges thus a field of tension on which the most profound range of human experience may be explored: all the abstractions of pride, grief, despair, outrage, wisdom and transcendence given a passionate living body.

Finally, supremely, the argument for the existence of a moral order—for "justice," if you will—in *The Book of Job* must be based, as Rabbi Weiner observes in *Commentary,* on direct or indirect experience, not on "the leap of faith." The experience to which Job is brought is the experience of the numinous, of God's otherness and measureless unknowability. The accounting of "justice"—for while Job ceases to question, the question remains unanswered—is thus never rendered; the enigma of innocent suffering unresolved. What we have is not theology and not philosophy. It is tragedy.

The MacLeish-Kazan intention with this received substance may be inferred from the play's title: on the one hand, an abstraction of Job from his specific Hebraic order and theodicy; on the other, an extension of his relevance to the American moment, to "the audience's present concerns." Mr. MacLeish's province is the former, and to its end he employs motifs of God and Satan as balloon-vendors in "a traveling circus which has been on the roads of the world for a long time"; symbolisms—"timeless," it is hoped—of universal chaos; a considerable levy on the pith and burning images of the Biblical language, and so on: a modified and rather weary expressionism, one might say, and a perpetual escape from commitment to fact. Mr. Kazan is the ideologue: for him, "J.B." is the parable of America mired in its middle-class hubris, and brought to book by "the Fates as presently felt by us all." Job's prototype he would see as the embodiment of "a whole era—liberal capitalism—Wendell Willkie." Nickles is seen as the nihilistic "Devil as Beat, the Devil as Jimmy Dean, the Devil as Angry Young Man." Mr. Zuss is the "authoritarian—simple-

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minded, optimistic, rigid, kindly (actually patronizing). Zuss wants to put himself in God's hands and ask no questions. *In His will is our peace.*" ("When T.S. Eliot says that these are the greatest words ever uttered," Mr. Kazan nicely observes, "I want to spit.")

Am I wrong in seeing a kind of monstrous inversion in this approach—that argument from the symbol to the fact which is the luxurious vice of the American imagination, with its habit, as Mr. Lionel Trilling has pointed out, of intolerance to anything which remains resistant to spiritualization? I am certain this root in abstraction accounts for public apathy to "J.B.," for the spectacle of so much vagrant attention and systematic boredom, complete rupture of emotional tension one may observe any night at the ANTA Theatre. This may seem an unkind cut, but it is not irrelevant to the final quality of any work of art, which must first of all be *interesting*. It is specially at issue in an enterprise such as "J.B.," with its attempt at mounting a conglomerate public forum on the theme of suffering. One would hardly wish to defend the lassitude of an audience, but even the most generous and alert attention cannot be long engaged by non-being.

It is again this impulse of abstraction which will not permit Mr. MacLeish to make any fresh observation about the experience of Job; which allows him only to restate and diminish it. His inquiry is a demonstration rather than a test: it *assumes*, and hence denies itself, as well as the spectator, the vitality of tragic dynamism, of "vision creating form." Indeed, "J.B.," by never emerging from what Mr. Lionel Abel very justly calls *post-reflection*, stands as a monument to that "tragedy in the head" which may be a platform for pageantry and rhetoric, but is hardly a fruitful soil for the mutual fertilization of language, action and concept.

The single potent innovation of "J.B." is, of course, to carry the anguished dialectic of Job beyond tragedy and even beyond theology to the mystical safe harbor of that humanism of crisis which has become the free port of so many contemporary spirits. We have observed that *The Book of Job* implies no question of faith, and Rabbi Weiner notes that it makes not one overt reference to love. It has been widely remarked—there is evidence of it even in the confusion of the *Esquire* correspondence—that Mr. MacLeish translates the final insight of Job, which is transcendent and hence unknowable, from the numinous plane to the human. He has become the last comforter, and he would counsel Love. He does this, Mr. MacLeish suggests in the *Christian Century* of April 8th, because he sees the "real meaning" of *Job* as an inquiry into *our* real concern: "the possibility of our living in this world, of our belief in life." And the answer of *Job* and "J.B." to this is that God has need of man: "without man's love God does not exist as God, only as creator, and love is the one thing no one, not even God himself, can com-

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mand. It is a free gift or it is nothing. And it is most itself, most free, when it is offered in spite of suffering, of injustice, and of death."

Mr. MacLeish has stated his conviction here with rather more persuasion than in "J.B.," yet for all his eloquence, may one conceive the real weight of *The Book of Job* as an inquiry into the possibility of our belief in life? Is it not rather a complete and terrible vision in itself, and its only inquiry what Rabbi Weiner calls "the question of whether this awful, powerful God is interested in running His creation according to principles which man recognizes as just and good—whether there is heart as well as power in the universe?" If Mr. MacLeish wished to make an affirmation of "life," I fear he trespassed on the wrong monument and the wrong model. And I must confess to finding some perversity in a "theology" which takes as the central fact of man his *irremediable* guilt—"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him: but I will maintain mine own ways before Him" Job insists—and which counsels us to bless and bless again an irrational Power without the mediation of the Christian Incarnation and Redemption, or the Jewish awe before the transcendent numinous, the voice out of the whirlwind.

Such a theology is curiously affronting, since at once it offers too little and demands too much; and about its exhortation to Go On—which is after all simply a cruel matter of biology—and Endure and Believe and Love, there is a certain fatuous hysteria. ("The thrill of the play," Mr. Kazan wildly asserts, "is not why J.B. perseveres but that he does.") An excellent comparable instance this season was Mr. William Faulkner's "Requiem for a Nun" which, after weaving a formidable tangle of moral theology, resolved it by sending the heroine *manquée*—a dreadful, interfering egotist who finally settled matters *once and for all* by murdering her benefactor's child—by dispatching this lady to the hangman in a poetic pool of light, as she announces with confident impersonality, *Just Believe!* How does this differ from that jewel of the jukeboxes which declares that every time a dewdrop drops, every time a baby burps, I BELIEVE?

The limitation of such sentiments, however noble in seeming, is that they have no validity outside of a larger context; they can only exhibit, as "J.B." does, the character of a vapid ethicism and a cheating secular mystique. As such, they belong to the phenomena of our time, and the desperation with which they are all around us proclaimed and embraced is as irrefutable a proof as any of the abiding mystery of Job's tragic dilemma.

I will defer comment on the production of "J.B." in order to consider it in connection with Mr. Tennessee William's "Sweet Bird of Youth," also directed by Mr. Kazan. *(At the Anta Theatre.)*

RICHARD HAYES.

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The Western Literary Scene

INTERNATIONAL LITERARY ANNUAL No. 1. Edited by John Wain. Criterion. $5.

By MAX COSMAN

HOPE MUST spring eternal in the annual-maker's breast. How else explain Mr. Wain's venture in the face of the petering out in his own country of predecessors *New Writing and Daylight, Orpheus, Focus, The Mint,* and *New Road?* Nor, in a sense, is there more encouragement for him in our country which, if *Evergreen Review, New World Writing,* and, latterly, *Noonday* be any warrant, seems to prefer its literature of other lands in the form of quarterly or semi-annual representations rather than in yearly analyses of the same.

The answer in part lies not so much in Mr. Wain's hope or courage as in his faith. Like the former university teacher that he is, recalling a professional impression, he believes that there are "readers who want to know what is happening in the word of letters." He is careful to point out that he is thinking of those readers who enjoy "discriminating comment" rather than "mere reckless inclusiveness." In other words, he means those who require that authors, trends, and movements should be judged by responsible critics and not by promoters of publicity. If this sounds like a private sensitivity, let it be recalled that V.S. Pritchett expressed something of the same nature in one of his recent London Letters. "All that happens in England," he complains, "is that writers do become known for non-literary reasons, and chiefly as gossip for the press."

Mr. Wain's aim, then, is to achieve "a genuine standard of quality" in his annual. Aware that there is many a slip between editorial intention and resulting contribution, he promises in succeeding issues "to correct some of the deficiencies, or prune the exuberances" of former ones. This is sound and commendable, of course. Well, how has he done in the volume before us? The word is, Excellently.

In some two-hundred-odd larger-than-octavo pages of text—incidentally, the format is striking, the illustrations suitable, the appendices on contributors and on selected books of the year functional—he has brought together articles which do the following: set a theme of the writer's relationship to the world; survey what has transpired in the German novel, in American and English poetry, in Italian and French letters; examine more particularly either the thought or the methodology of such personages as Thomas Mann, T. S. Eliot, Baudelaire, and Joyce Cary; offer considerations on topics like Angry Young Men, Shifting Patterns in American Literature; and, in a bid for relaxation, allow Rebecca West to give us a delightful period piece on Pirandello.

Obviously, one can cavil, as Mr. Wain himself anticipated, at a limitation here or an excrescence there. One can say that K. W. Gransden is unexpectedly defeatist as he ends his discussion, or that Carolyn Kizer's tone is too cute at times, or that Andrew Wright's piece is less weighty than Gabriel Pearson's or Michael Hamburger's, or that Alain Robbe-Grillet's avant-garde assurances about the passing of the traditional novel are provocative rather than convincing, or that Ugo Varnai is not alone in failing to give adequate proof for the importance he ascribes to some writers, or that a generalization like Marshall McLuhan's "Europe and Britain have never quite lost their oral culture but America never had one" indicates a fondness for free-wheeling pronouncements which he shares with other essayists in the book.

In saying such things, one is, however, noticing blemishes, not denying offerings. These considered as a whole, it strikes me, constitute a necessary exploration of what is increasingly coming to be a one-world literary scene. In putting before us findings like the ironies of ideological commitment, the dearth of outstanding postwar writers, the significance to communication of electronics and the paperback, they fulfill themselves. For theirs it is to sift, to record, and, in a degree, to prognosticate. Need one add that as their organ, the *International Literary Annual,* continues to do so, it will deserve our support?

Salvation Through Suffering

DEATH IN THAT GARDEN. By Jose Andre Lacour. Rinehart. $3.95.

By THOMAS E. CASSIDY

IT SEEMS that most novelists of this day are able only to reach the rim of the world of suffering. Frequently, in searching into the darkness of the soul's torment, they become lost in their own preoccupation, even obsession, with the physical reality of man's grief, misery, and death. It is grim to use all this despair in order to reach the absolute of the soul's torment, and it is a grueling work for the artist. The novelist must illuminate the love of man for man; he must also create the agony of man, alone and with his fellow man. He can, with insight, add to this the light of God's love for all men, and most especially God's love for those who struggle against that love while they are prostrated by its apparent absence from their lives.

Jose Andre Lacour reflects this illumination brilliantly in a remarkable and compelling novel, *Death in That Garden.* It is a scorching, violent exploration of a journey into a literal and a spiritual jungle. It is astonishing in its power, shocking in impact, but tender and moving as the love it describes—an outstanding work written with ferocity and daring. The prose is clear and

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strong; the scenes are vivid; the talk and the settings are natural and full of force.

The people in this book, torn from their past by their own individual disasters, are thrown together in an Amazonian prospecting town which is caught up in anarchy and rebellion. Chark, a Jew-hating ex-Nazi, is a prisoner in the world of his defeated hatred. Father Strauben, a parish priest, stumbles and searches for the true meaning of his vocation. There are Castin, an amoral prospector, and his deaf-mute daughter, Maria; Djinn, a young prostitute of the ages; Corazon, the power-crazed soldier; and Goldberg, the Jew, who has lost all his love for life. They all must flee from certain execution by government soldiers, and they follow Chark into the jungles, to search for freedom and treasure, only to discover their own senses and their own souls through the shattering of their bodies and spirits. All of them must learn to love again.

We are reminded sharply of Graham Greene's haunted priest in Lacour's Father Strauben, who also reaches a point of despair in the testing of his vocation: ". . . he thought that there was something preposterous, something mysterious about the whole thing; an impenetrable design; a strange, formidable joke whose point you could not see; and that it was from God." This priest, faced by plague-ridden savages, prays for ". . . just one second thy love, one single second that I may murmur thy name in the ears of the dying." Then, ". . . he took the knife thrust full in the face."

All of them feel toward Chark, their reluctant leader, a curious sensation of security; they have ". . . a need to place their trust in a man whom they did not like, but who fascinated them." Goldberg, whose Jewishness finally merges into oneness with Chark who has hated him, knows of his own failure because ". . . for a long time past, I had no longer been interested in myself." At last Chark can feel toward Goldberg what must be love, as he loses his own loneliness.

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But all he can say, as he tries to think of anything to say, is, ". . . How's it going, old fellow?" Goldberg's eyes become ". . . full of tears and light." Djinn, too, knows the compassion that men can feel, and this woman of a dark world can now unpack her heart with love.

It is possible to find in this story a force that does not in itself impose a symbolism, but the symbolism comes through almost unconsciously. The whole world of man, the evil and the good, are mixed in the blood of all the people here, so that it is not exaggerated to say that the horror, as it fades, carries out the meaning of salvation through suffering that is the hope of Christians. In this novel, the artistry of the Belgian Lacour is a great one.

Prism of Relations

THE MIDDLE AGE OF MRS. ELIOT. By Angus Wilson. Viking. $4.95.

By ANNE FREMANTLE

IT IS RARE in the annals of literature that a bachelor should attempt a full-length presentation of a mature woman, and succeed. Flaubert's Madame Bovary is perhaps Mrs. Eliot's only predecessor. But Meg Eliot is no Emma: never was a forty-three-year-old wife, suddenly widowed, more sane, more discerning, nor ultimately more serene.

Meg and her husband were rich, in love, kind and intelligent. They seemed to have everything, except children: Bill's job was what he wanted; they had a lovely house in Westminster, friends, hobbies; Meg collected china and charities, was masterful, sensitive, happy.

They give a good party on the eve of a six-months-trip to the Far East. And then, in the airport at Srem Panh, with less than two hours to go before reaching Singapore, their destination, Bill is shot, protecting an unknown local Minister.

Meg is left alone, and Mr. Wilson analyzes every last ounce of her loneliness. From the first instant of guilty shock—she had thought Bill already dead when the stewardess told her of the accident, and so she had not hurried, and had thus missed a few seconds of Bill's dying—to the last, finally liberated letters, when Meg shows herself once more complete, redecorated and refurbished, with a craft and a job, the reader is plunged into Meg's life, and exposed to all its facets. Book One shows Meg to herself, Book Two, to her friends, and Book Three, through her friends. Throughout, Mr. Wilson supplies a scalpel-sharp compassion, that evaluates every situation, judges it, and proceeds further.

When, for instance, her husband's best friend is thrown at her by one of her Job's comforter-friends, Meg sees and accepts the situation, but not the proposition. When her hostess's worthless son thinks her interest other than it was, and drunkenly attempts to maul her, Meg analyzes her distaste for the scene, and her responsibility for its occurrence, together with a steady recognition of her own possible physical needs. Almost Mr. Wilson follows the eightfold path shown by the Buddha; yet he is never guilty, even for a second, of letting his slip show: he is a story-teller, and every moment of truth must be shown through a character, never told by the author. All reality, Rabindranath Tagore said, is relationship, and Meg Eliot's relationships are complex and manifold, so that reading her story is like looking in a child's kaleidoscope: each situation gives a new arrangement, a new color combination; never are the patterns the same, yet always the colors are held in the prism, always illuminated.

Mr. Wilson has learned a lot since he wrote *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes,* that hilarious but vitriolic take-off of early medieval historians and their private lives and entanglements. There, he had subjected almost every conceivable type of English inhibition to a peeling process. Under his relentless scrutiny, sexual aberrations, shyness, sibling rivalry, scholarly testiness, and the whole gamut of escape mechanisms were

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exposed to the funniest of analyses, and not a fig-leaf of decency was left to any one of Mr. Wilson's characters, all of whom were either odious or idiotic. It was a book (as Miss Beatrix Potter remarked about her *Tale of Mr. Toad)* wholly about unpleasing persons. But to write such a book is as false as to cover all with a goo of sweetness and light: too profound a darkness blinds as surely as too dazzling an illumination. Mr. Wilson and Louisa M. Alcott were hoist with the same petard.

In the stories, however (especially in *A Bit Off the Map*) Mr. Wilson was more subtle, although he still had a tendency to use his social awareness as previous novelists had used their moral acumen. For heroes or villains, read true or false to class, to sub-class or sub-species. For in the fraction of the original British three (upper, middle and lower) into many, many classes, Mr. Wilson's characters found themselves defined rather by education, occupation and avocation than by the simple stud-book of yore. His men and women were good guys or bad guys only in so far as they kept faithfully to the place to which the Welfare State had called them. No living writer has a more subtle or perfect understanding of the many diverse worlds, of the nursery gardener, the academic don, the interior decorator, the member of the Establishment or the Stock Exchange, the entertainment industry fringe benefiter or the marginal member of the world's oldest profession. There is, indeed, no form of life with which this ex-Foreign Office official and ex-British Museum librarian is unacquainted. And his humor—dry, light, heady—suffuses even works so thoroughly dated as *For Whom the Cloche Tolls.*

But in *The Middle Age of Mrs. Eliot,* love, like sunlight, suddenly turns the whole brilliant engraving into a rich painting. The entire landscape is illumined, for as Cézanne said, the sun is the hero of every picture. Here is a masterpiece, a novel to set beside the greatest, even above the Zolas Mr. Wilson so perceptively criticizes and admires.

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ROSMINI: Priest, Philosopher and Patriot. By Claude Leetham. Helicon. $7.50.

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FORTY CONDEMNED propositions listed in Denzinger's *Enchiridion Symbolorum* constitute the ecclesiastical student's introduction to Antonio Rosmini. Because there is so little in English on Rosmini, acquaintance with him seldom advances beyond this first unfavorable impression. And the Anglo-Saxon public is generally unaware of the existence of this important Italian figure of the first half of the nineteenth century. So this first, original, full-length biography in English has the double task of rehabilitating Rosmini and of presenting him as he really was, an illustrious and loyal son of the

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Church. It does both most convincingly.

In a sense Rosmini was a victim of the clerical incomprehension, the papal hesitation and the political turmoil of his times. Yet these factors were also the occasions for his grandeur. Aware that his century was in radical transition, Rosmini strove in action and in reflection to serve both the Church and the century. Such loyalty is never realized without suffering.

"Priest, philosopher and patriot" reads the sub-title of this biography. These are quite evidently the major aspects of his stupendous activity but richer than any of them is the very person of Rosmini. A singular individual, an aristocrat in the finest tradition, someone whose existence had an original flavor, in his case that of nobility of spirit. His portrait alone, and the physical description of him given in an appendix, fascinate. There was about the person of Rosmini a calm which even the most tragic events of his life could not unsettle.

As priest Rosmini enjoyed the privileges of noble birth and private income which might have proved obstacles to apostolic activity. However, he was the indefatigable founder and sustainer of the Institute of Charity, a religious congregation dedicated to the purest evangelical principles. Already in Rosmini's lifetime, its sons served admirably the cause of the Church in many nations, notably in England.

Only the most fanatical of his opponents called his sacerdotal character into question. His apostolic approach, best expressed in his *Maxims*, was marked with the virile simplicity of the Gospel. It was also marked by honesty and clairvoyance. In this regard, his much criticized, and Indexed, *The Five Wounds of the Church*, as well as his advocacy of more active participation of the laity in worship were, given the subsequent history of the Church, prophetic.

There is no doubt that his social and financial position gave him an independence in sacerdotal activity that he might not otherwise have enjoyed. He controlled this, however, with careful obedience both to respective bishops and most especially to successive pontiffs, some of whom showed him special favor, unfortunately not always of a decisive nature. Besides, his relative sacerdotal freedom worked providentially for the accomplishment o his priestly mission.

As philosopher Rosmini attempted the pioneer job of restoring order to the confusion of philosophical studies in Catholic circles in his age. In this respect he was highly esteemed especially in the early part of his career and is now considered by some historians as an early exponent of the Scholastic revival which came only at the end of his century. On his own he developed a philosophical system orientated by the idea of being which he felt served as a basis for rationality, for morality, for a study of the human person and finally of divine being. If he did not wholly succeed in this gigantic enterprise, it is the heroic failure of the pioneer.

As patriot Rosmini was a sober advocate of many of the liberating political, social and economic ideas of his age. He was also the friend of a good number of important Risorgimento personalities but it would be a mistake to imagine him as a liberal democrat. Actually, there were several democratic elements, universal suffrage, for example, on which he was intransigent. Nonetheless, he was trusted by many political figures responsible for the drive toward unification of Italy and at least reckoned with by the others.

There is no question that Rosmini was a leader in the intellectual life of his period. Many other famous names from all over the European continent came to seek him out for advice on the most diverse of issues. A certain number of them, Manzoni above all, were his intimate friends. The uncompromising sympathy of the gentle Rosmini kept Catholicism alive in the hearts of many intelligent men who were swayed by the anti-clerical winds of aborning Italy and who were discouraged by the reticence of the Church.

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The psychiatrist needs to know what sanctity is; the priest something about psychiatry; college students and the general public need some training in both.

In press, 1959

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Claude Leetham, a member of the English community of the Rosminians, has paid his biographical effort the tribute of sobriety. He does not plead a cause but permits Rosmini, the man and his life, to speak his own eloquence. Perhaps his presentation moves too slowly for the first half of the book and his work is weighed down with lengthy quotations from writings and letters of Rosmini and his friends. However, the paucity of Rosminian data in English and the gravity of certain instances in Rosmini's life are adequate arguments for otherwise overly extensive quotation.

Pope Gregory XVI described Rosmini with these words, which were later to be inscribed on the cenotaph that supports the effigy of Rosmini erected over his grave: "Antonio Rosmini . . . is a man of eminent intellect, adorned with noble qualities of soul, exceedingly famous for his knowledge of things human and divine, outstanding for his remarkable piety, religion, virtue, probity, prudence and integrity, conspicuous for his wonderful love and loyalty to the Catholic religion and to this Apostolic See. . . ." This eulogy, in contrast to the less complimentary character of the forty condemned propositions, should alone stimulate a prospective reader. He will discover that the drama and significance of Antonio Rosmini's life certainly are not lacking in contemporary resonance.

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TESTAMENT AND OTHER POEMS. By John Fandel. Sheed and Ward. $.95.

By BETTE RICHART

PROBABLY most have forgotten that quiet masterpiece "A Map of Verona," by Henry Reed, which appeared twelve years ago and proved decisively that the image is not the whole poem, any more than the composition is the whole painting. In a sense Henry Reed wrote the poetry of statement; he some-

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times actually said something, rather than evoked feelings. In poetry this is a safe method only when the poet is both a philosopher and a grammarian, as Mr. Reed was and Mr. Fandel is. Their poetry would be absurd if they were only aesthetes, but fortunately they are far more than that, and their civilization bears traces of bitterness and violence controlled by an act of will, transfigured by an act of faith.

Mr. Reed's "Lessons of the War," containing the poems "Naming of Parts," "Judging Distances," and "Unarmed Combat," was really a lesson in the poetry of situation. True poems are often, if not always, woven of the most unlikely, yet most durable, materials, somewhat after the fashion of birds' nests. But this is a consideration of Mr. Fandel's new, and by no means, derivative talent; Mr. Reed was his predecessor, but not his source.

"This Side of Asia" beautifully demonstrates the importance of taste in the use of language. Mr. Fandel remarks conversationally:

> I had a friend who would not rest
> Until he climbed Mt. Everest.

In the hands of the unskillful, such a theme could easily deteriorate to the level of newspaper verse, could have become "inspirational" in the cheapest possible sense. Not so in the case of John Fandel. In the first place, we are never quite sure whether his friend succeeded or failed;

> And it became something we never said
> A word about. Mt. Everest was dead,
> As far as I cared. And more: it never was.
> Nothing can change the world as living does.

We know that if he did succeed, it didn't matter to him (life's most ironical surprise) and we know that if he failed, he discovered an untranslatable secret ("there are mountains taller than Mt. Everest"). I know of no other linguistically simple poem which carries so much

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weight with so much grace. I kept thinking of Toscanini's recording of the Skater's Waltz, so purely and gently done that one has listened to a bar or so before one recognizes what it is.

However, Mr. Fandel can perform all sorts of sleight-of-hand with words, as "Prestidigitator" and "Legend" show. Speaking of the enchanted and the disenchanted in the magician's audience, he says

> Both miss the point illusion is
> A matter of;
> He put the rabbit there, but his
> Routine, like love,
>
> Is magic just to make us think
> It isn't where
> It is, and then quick as a wink
> To show it's there

Without flippancy, and with a wit always sad and subtle, Mr. Fandel shows time and time again that the point we are intent on making was splendidly accomplished—only it wasn't a point at all, much less *the* point. Once one becomes aware of humiliation as such, one must choose between humility and resentment. Of course, poets choose humility.

Like another important Catholic poet in America, Ned O'Gorman, Mr. Fandel does not fear the implications of personality. Detached he is, in method, content and philosophy, yet his book gives the impression that he has told the story of his life. (Possibly detachment *is* the story.) But it is a detachment learned through a complexity of affections; the ungaudy Valentine, "About my Students," must speak to every serious teacher:

> Among their lolling youth my day-dreams flit:
> How I, like they, once lived from bell to bell.
> No old accumulated notes can tell
> Them life is stranger than they fancy it.

In "Call the Beast Fear," he says "We saw the wood we shared in spite of trees." He has replaced tedious cliché with insight, achieving a rare level of Christian civiliza-

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tion, compassionate and careful. Sheed and Ward are to be congratulated for making so excellent a poet easily available; it is a brave gesture, and I hope it will prove to be a precedent.

The Sea of Life

THE KINGDOM UNDER THE SEA. By Henri Queffélec. Translated by Len Ortzen. Pantheon. $3.50.

By CHARLES MONAGHAN

FOR ALL BUT the last two pages *The Kingdom under the Sea* is a fine novel. In these pages, however, author Henri Queffélec tacks on a happy ending where art calls for a continuing exploration of the mind of the main character, and thereby undoes a plot that he carefully, poetically, had nurtured through the book.

Fortunately, the good qualities of M. Quéffelec's work cannot be destroyed by his choice of conclusion. Foremost among several virtues is the distinctive world which the author creates. He pares away the layers of the social fabric to consider a man in but two of his occupations: as breadwinner and as mate. It is an odd world, one where sailors aboard Captain Jean Modénou's fishing boat have nicknames like Hake, Sardine and Mullet, and the dog is Winston.

This interrelation of the world of man with that of animal, especially with the world of the Celtic seas off Brittany, where much of the action takes place, sets the tone of the novel. Modénou's hunting of fish in order to survive is analogous to the hunting that goes on beneath the waves. And it is his animal-like insensitivity ashore—not understanding his wife's need for love—that causes a strain on his marriage. This double theme is developed throughout the book so that Modénou's betrayal by a member of his crew is twofold: the sailor divulges the location of a new fishing ground that the captain has discovered, and seduces his wife.

But Modénou's animal-like exist-

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SPRING JUVENILE ISSUE
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ence does not mean that he is a completely evil character. He possesses solid animal virtues too. He is strong, brave, quick-witted, and loyal to his crew, and these virtues hold him in good stead in the exciting fishing scenes described by M. Queffélec. The power that Modénou has over his crew is so great that when he sentences the offending sailor to jump quietly overboard on the fishing trip following the double betrayal, we quite believe the sailor will, and M. Queffélec leads us to believe he dies. The prospect of Modénou coming to realize the horror of this murder is an appealing one, but just at this point the sailor is rescued by command of Modénou. It is redemption that M. Queffélec intends for Modénou. As he describes the captain in the last paragraph: "He is preparing to rejoin Madeleine, and this prospect of seeing her again no longer troubles him. He has come to know his own faults and, like an invalid who fought back to a recovery, the feelings uppermost in him now are joy and confidence." The rub is that Modénou has not earned the right to such knowledge.

M. Queffélec's poetic descriptions of the sea, his delicately suggested analogy of fishing to life, and his keen psychological penetration into the relationship of Modénou and his wife distinguish the novel. If the author had been able to solve the thorny problem of Modénou's redemption with a less artificial ending, this would merit consideration as a major novel.

REVIEWERS

Max Cosman is a frequent contributor to critical and scholarly journals.

Thomas E. Cassidy is a member of the English Department at Southern Illinois University.

Anne Fremantle is the well-known writer, lecturer and critic. Her recent novel is *By Grace of Love*.

Father William Petrek is head of the department of philosophy at Holy Cross Seminary, La Crosse, Wisconsin.

Bette Richart, a poet and critic, is a frequent contributor.

Charles A. Monaghan is on the administrative staff of New York University.

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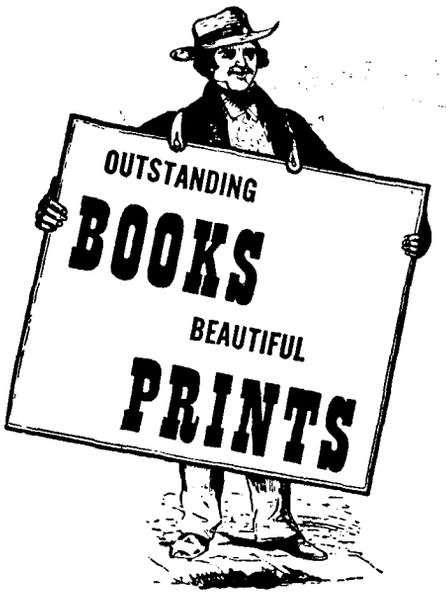

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